

Message Text

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ACTION EA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 COME-00 EB-07 INR-07 LAB-04

NSAE-00 SIL-01 AID-05 OMB-01 OC-05 SY-05 OPR-02 SCS-03

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SP-02 SS-15 INRE-00 NSCE-00 SSO-00 USIE-00 /086 W

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FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 5032

INFO CINCPAC HONOLULU HI

DIA WASHDC

COMUSMACTHAI BANGKOK THAI

C O N F I D E N T I A L BANGKOK 10181

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, PINS, ELAB, TH

SUBJECT: RTG RESPONSE TO THREAT OF A GENERAL STRIKE

REF: A) BANGKOK 10180

B) BANGKOK 9932

BEGIN SUMMARY:

THE RTG ANNOUNCED A TWO PRONGED RESPONSE OVER NATIONAL RADIO TO THREAT OF A GENERAL STRIKE: 1) A DECLARATION THAT ANY GENERAL STRIKE WOULD VIOLATE THAI LABOR LAW, 2) A NEW RTG POLICY ON LABOR DISPUTES AND A SPECIFIC ANSWER TO LABOR'S DEMANDS MADE IN CONNECTION WITH THE THREAT OF A GENERAL STRIKE BOTH RESPONSIVE TO CRITICISMS OF THE RTG, THOUGH ON THE KEY ISSUE OF REMOVAL OF POL. COL. YUTTHANA, THE RTG REFUSED A DECISION UNTIL AFTER INVESTIGATING THE FACTS OF THE CASE.

END SUMMARY.

1. IN A SPECIAL ANNOUNCEMENT CARRIED OVER NATIONAL RADIO

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TO THE WHOLE OF THAILAND THE RTG RESPONDED TO THE THREAT OF

A GENERAL STRIKE.

2. THE RADIO REPORTED A MEETING HELD DURING THE AFTERNOON OF 3 JUNE BETWEEN THE DIRECTOR GENERAL OF THE LABOR DEPT AND LABOR LEADERS. THE NATIONAL RADIO ANNOUNCEMENT SAID THAT THE DG OF THE LABOR DEPT TOLD LABOR LEADERS ANY GENERAL STRIKE WOULD BE IN VIOLATION OF THAI LABOR LAW. HE SAID THAT ALTHOUGH THE RTG WAS RESTUDYING THE TOTAL GOVERNMENT ROLE IN THE FIELD OF LABOR RELATIONS IN AN EFFORT TO MAKE IT MORE EFFECTIVE, THE RTG INTENDED TO ENFORCE PRESENT LAW AGAINST A GENERAL STRIKE. THE DG ACKNOWLEDGED THAT THERE HAD BEEN MANY PROBLEMS IN LABOR RELATIONS DURING THE LAST FEW WEEKS, BUT CALLED FOR PATIENCE FROM BOTH LABOR AND MANAGEMENT WHILE THE GOVERNMENT REORGANIZED TO HANDLE THIS NEW CHALLENGE.

3. NATIONAL RADIO ALSO REPORTED THE LABOR DEPT DG'S ANNOUNCEMENT AT THIS SAME AFTERNOON MEETING WITH LABOR LEADERS OF A NEW RTG POLICY IN LABOR DISPUTES: A) RTG WILL PROTECT RIGHTS OF BOTH SIDES INVOLVED IN LABOR DISPUTES, B) THE GOVERNMENT GUARANTEES THE RIGHTS OF STRIKERS DURING A STRIKE, C) IN THE EVENT OF AN ILLEGAL STRIKE THE GOVERNMENT WILL ENTER THE LABOR DISPUTE AND ORDER THE PARTY FAILING TO OBEY THE LAW TO DO SO, D) THERE SHOULD NEVER BE A REASON FOR A VIOLENCE DURING A STRIKE, IF THE STRIKE IS NOT VIOLENT, THE POLICE WILL NEVER ENTER THE DISPUTE, E) IF ALL EMPLOYEES DO NOT SUPPORT THE STRIKE AND ONE GROUP WISHES TO RETURN TO WORK, THE RTG WILL SUPERVISE A REFERENDUM; MAJORITY RULE WILL PREVAIL, F) RTG WILL ENDEAVOR TO ENFORCE THE LAW IMPARTIALLY WITHOUT SERVING THE INTEREST OF MANAGEMENT OR LABOR, AS SUCH, G) THE GOVERNMENT WILL DISCOURAGE OUTSIDERS TO LABOR DISPUTES (STUDENTS, ACTIVISTS) FROM ENTERING LABOR DISPUTES AND MAKING THEM HARDER TO SETTLE, H) RTG WILL ENCOURAGE DEVELOPMENT OF BOTH LABOR UNIONS AND EMPLOYEE FEDERATIONS, I) RTG IS DETERMINED TO REDOUBLE ITS EFFORTS IN LABOR EDUCATION, J) GOVERNMENT INTENDS TO AMMEND THE LABOR LAW, K) RTG WILL TRY TO IMPROVE THE EFFICIENCY OF THE LABOR DEPT.

4. WITH REGARD TO LABOR LEADERS DEMANDS CONNECTED WITH THEIR THREAT OF A GENERAL STRIKE, THE SAME RADIO PROGRAM ANNOUNCED THE RTG'S RESPONSE: ON THE KEY DEMAND TO REMOVE THE POLICE

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OFFICER WHO GAVE THE ORDER TO FORCE THE PICKET LINE AT STANDARD GARMENT, THE GOVERNMENT REQUESTED TIME TO STUDY THE FACTS BEFORE A DECISION. RTG GUARANTEED STRIKERS SAFETY WHILE THEY ARE ENGAGED IN A STRIKE. RTG AGREED TO PAY HOSPITAL BILLS AND DAMAGES TO THOSE HURT AT STANDARD GARMENT WHILE EXPRESSING REGRET THAT THE INCIDENT OCCURRED. RTG PROMISED TO BRING THE TWO PARTIES IN THE DUSIT THANI STRIKE TOGETHER IN AN EFFORT TO REOPEN THE HOTEL AND AGREED TO ORDER THE REMOVAL OF THE

INFAMOUS "RED GAURS" FROM THE HOTEL PREMISES.

COMMENT: RTG RESPONSE WAS CONSTRUCTIVE AND WELL CHARACTERIZED BY "CARROT AND THE STICK." ANNOUNCEMENT OF NEW GOVERNMENT POLICY ON LABOR DISPUTES IS RESPONSIVE IN A VERY BALANCED WAY TO MANAGEMENT AND LABOR'S CRITICISMS OF RTG LABOR DEPT'S WEAK ROLE IN PAST DISPUTES. RTG'S ANSWER TO DEMANDS ASSOCIATED WITH GENERAL STRIKE REPRESENT THE BEST RTG COULD DO WITHOUT TOTALLY ALIENATING THE CONSERVATIVES. LABOR LEADERS SEEM COMMITTED TO A RUN AT A GENERAL STRIKE BUT IN LIGHT OF FORTHCOMING RTG POSITION STRIKE IS UNLIKELY TO BE VERY SUCCESSFUL. GENERAL KRIT TOLD THE DCM THAT KRIT HAD COUNSELED KHUKRIT TO TAKE A HARD LINE WITH LABORERS ON THEIR THREAT OF A GENERAL STRIKE. MOREOVER KRIT CLAIMED HE CLEARLY TOLD KHUKRIT THAT IF PUBLIC ORDER DETERIORATED THE ARMY WOULD MOVE. AT THE SAME TIME KRIT'S OWN BEST JUDGEMENT WAS THAT LABOR AND STUDENT ACTIVISTS WOULD DO NO BETTER THAN A SMALL DEMONSTRATION AT LUMPINI PARK. KRIT TOLD THE DCM THAT THE THAI ARMY WAS NOT EVEN TO GO ON ALERT.
WHITEHOUSE

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